

July protester succumbs to gunshot injuries

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Md Ashique Rahman Hridoy, 17, who suffered critical gunshot wounds in his head during the 2024 uprising in Dhaka's Jatrabari area, has died while undergoing treatment in Patuakhali.



Hridoy

Abdur Rauf, the upazila health and family planning officer, said Hridoy was brought to Bauphal Upazila Health Complex around noon on Friday.

"He was in a critical condition. We advised his family to take him to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barishal immediately, but they couldn't arrange the transfer in time. He died here around 4:00pm," Rauf said.

Hridoy was laid to rest at the family graveyard yesterday morning after a namaj-e-janaja.

The young protester, son of rickshaw-puller Ansar Hawlader of Paschim Jauta village in Bauphal upazila, had been suffering from post-injury complications for months.

According to family members, Hridoy used to work as a labourer

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PHOTO: CA'S PRESS WING

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at an emergency meeting with advisers, the central bank governor and senior officials at the state guesthouse Jamuna yesterday evening to discuss Bangladesh's response to new tariffs announced by the US.

First step towards easing tensions

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India has drastically cut down on visas for Bangladeshis.

The Indian government too expressed concerns over alleged minority repression.

In December last year, Dhaka sought extradition for Hasina, who faces charges of mass killings in Bangladesh during the July uprising.

At Friday's meeting, Yunus did not hesitate to seek an update on Hasina's extradition request, detailing the crimes committed during the July uprising and referring to the UN Fact-Finding Mission's report.

Prof Sreeradha Datta, also a non-resident senior fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, said the extradition process is a complicated one.

Bangladesh will have to initiate legal procedures for a formal request of extradition and India's judicial system will examine the matter closely. Extradition request is a complex issue and any such move will not be easy.

India will not extradite Hasina unless there is serious international pressure, said a diplomatic source.

Yunus raised the issue of Hasina's inflammatory statements at the meeting, but Modi blamed social media for the tensions around her remarks.

Modi also urged that "the rhetoric that vitiates the environment" is avoided.

India has not taken positively the recent remarks by Yunus on northeast India during his visit to China, Datta said.

"I think both sides need to maintain logic and speak based on facts when those involve bilateral relations," she said.

Modi's statement that India believes in people-centric relationships and does not support any particular political party or individual is extremely important, Biswas said.

"To take the relations forward, I would suggest that India ease the visa regime for Bangladeshis at the soonest. This will greatly help normalise the relations."

Yunus rightly invited Indian media to visit Bangladesh and report the facts on minority issues.

"This can help remove any wrong perceptions," he added.

Some of the issues that irritate Bangladesh including the long-pending Teesta water sharing deal, the renewal of the Ganges water treaty and border killing were raised by Yunus in the meeting.

"The frank conversation at all levels between the two countries needs to continue to address the issues," Datta said.

Bangladesh deeply values its relationship with India, Yunus told Modi, describing the historical links and acknowledging India's role in Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971.

Modi reiterated India's support for a "democratic, stable, peaceful, progressive and inclusive Bangladesh" and highlighted that cooperation between the two countries has brought tangible benefits to the people of both countries and underlined India's desire to forge a positive and constructive relationship with Bangladesh based on pragmatism.

"These positive comments from both sides are a friendly gesture, but the relationship is likely to normalise once there is a democratically-elected government in power in Bangladesh," Datta added.

Bangladesh moves to deal with US tariff shock

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With stakeholders across government and industry, including the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry. He is scheduled to meet today with US Embassy Chargé d'Affaires Tracey Ann Jacobson, where he will formally express Bangladesh's concern over the tariff decision and share the outlines of the government's position.

After the meeting convened by Yunus yesterday, Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin said at a press briefing that the government will reduce the trade gap with the US by increasing the import of American goods, including cotton, soybean oil, petroleum products and industrial machinery. Trade barriers will also be removed to increase imports from America, he added.

"Our current understanding is that we will not be harmed," he said. "Because if you look at the competitor countries like Vietnam, China, Cambodia, you'll see that they mainly produce the same kind of goods."

"In the apparel sector, we are more diversified than India and Pakistan, even though they have lower tariffs than ours. And the structure or spectrum of our industry is more mature than theirs."

"We believe this may actually open up new doors of opportunity. We had started engaging with them even earlier," the commerce adviser said, adding that High Representative Khalilur visited the US in February on Yunus's instructions.

"Cotton imported from the US required fumigation twice. We amended our import policy through the commerce ministry, requiring fumigation only once. This removed a trade barrier and will boost trade," Bashir Uddin said. "Possibly, we were the first to raise the issue when Khalil went to the US. The US side itself said that we were the first to come forward. That shows our seriousness. We understood the issue earlier than others," he added.

Khalilur said he raised the issue at the US State Department first. "They were very enthusiastic. They themselves arranged meetings with the US Trade Representative, the Agriculture Department, and others."

"That's why I say that there's nothing to fear. We are in very good hands. We are currently in close discussions with them. These talks will continue over the next couple of days. We will send our official

response after intensive consultation with the US authorities," Khalilur said, adding that he had talked to the US Deputy National Security Advisor at the White House during a conversation just a few days ago.

"So they are aware. This is not some kind of bolt from the blue. The chief adviser had foreseen this when the Trump administration came in. And he responded in time," he said.

"We are the first country to take a unilateral initiative, and they [US] have recognised this. Therefore, we expect that when we formally request a review, we will receive a positive response," the high representative said.

US President Donald Trump on April 2 announced the 37 percent tariff on imports from Bangladesh, effective from April 9.

Now the Bangladesh government is seeking to open formal negotiations with the USTR to secure relief from the newly imposed tariffs and address the trade imbalance between the two countries. Bangladesh has assigned its mission in Washington to help arrange a meeting with the USTR, while also observing how other countries impacted by similar measures are preparing to respond.

The commerce ministry, in coordination with the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission, the National Board of Revenue, the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), and other relevant agencies, is gathering trade data and holding consultations to shape the plan.

After the meeting with Yunus, Ashik Chowdhury, executive chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), said that of the \$8 billion in annual exports from Bangladesh to the US, \$7 billion originates from the garment industry, half a billion from leather, and the remainder from plastics and other sectors.

He said he held meetings with the stakeholders of all these sectors from morning to evening yesterday. "We've listened to their concerns and their suggestions. As you can imagine, different people offer different suggestions. We're trying to bring all the feedback together to reach a constructive, collective

agreement and a decision point," Ashik said.

Lutfey Siddiqi, the chief adviser's special envoy on international affairs, said, "What the US has actually done is calculate our trade surplus as a percentage of total bilateral trade. That simple percentage figure—74 percent—doesn't mean 74 percent of our imports are now under new duties."

"Our response isn't just about duties or deficits," he said, adding that a report published by the United States Trade Representative (USTR) a week ago mentioned three areas in its chapter on Bangladesh: customs and duties, intellectual property enforcement, and regulatory environment (e.g., use of digital systems).

"These three areas match the reforms we're already working on. So this will be part of the overall package that we're presenting. It includes non-tariff issues as well as our broader reform agenda," he said.

Abdur Rahman Khan, chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR); Md Touhid Hossain, foreign adviser; Ahsan H Mansur, Bangladesh Bank governor; and Khairuzzaman Mozumder, finance secretary, attended the meeting.

Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan, adviser to the power, energy and mineral resources ministry, road transport and bridges ministry, and railways ministry; Zaidi Sattar, a trade expert; and Shafiqul Alam, press secretary to the chief adviser, were also present.

Ashik had earlier held a consultation meeting with a group of businessmen in Dhaka. They included Tapan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Pharmaceuticals; Syed Nasim Manzur, managing director of Apex Footwear Limited; Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman and chief executive director of PRAN-RFL Group; Mostafa Abid Khan, former member of Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission; and Zaidi Sattar.

In 2024, Bangladesh exported \$8.26 billion worth of goods to the US while importing only \$2.21 billion, a trade surplus that is nearly three times larger than American exports to Bangladesh.

Local exporters have expressed alarm, warning that the new tariffs could disrupt exports to the US, which remains Bangladesh's single largest export destination.

the rehabilitation of Pagla treatment plant. However, only one has been constructed in Dasherbandi, while the Pagla plant remains in disrepair, running at less than half of its capacity to treat 120,000 tonnes of sewage per day.

Citing a shortage of funds and land as major barriers to implementing the master plan, a top Wasa official said the Dasherbandi plant now processes mainly wastewater, handling between three and five lakh tonnes daily. If brought under Wasa's sewerage network, it could treat up to five lakh tonnes of sewage per day.

It will require Tk 3,000 crore to link the plant to the sewerage network and set up sewage lifting stations. In September last year, a project proposal was sent to the LGRD ministry, which is yet to approve it, said the official.

Besides, a feasibility study on a sewage treatment plant in Uttara is underway, mentioned the official, adding that Wasa is struggling to acquire land for its Mirpur and Rayerbazar treatment facilities.

Experts warn that relying solely on large-scale treatment plants could mean waiting decades for results. They advocate immediate action: enforcement of regulations on septic tank installation, setting up of small treatment units, and rehabilitation of existing sewage treatment facilities.

"Without swift action, Dhaka's water bodies will remain dumping grounds ... We need practical and localised solutions to safeguard public health and the environment," said Mujibur.

PASSPORT INDEX Bangladesh moves up a notch

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has advanced one position in the global passport strength index, moving from 182nd to 181st place, according to a recent report published by Dubai-based global consultancy firm Nomad Capitalist.

As in previous years, Nomad Capitalist has released its Global Passport Index for 2025.

The index ranks passports from around the world based on five weighted criteria: visa-free travel (50%), taxation (20%), global perception (10%), the ability to hold dual citizenship (10%), and personal freedom (10%).

Scores range from 10 to 50, except for the visa category, which is the number of countries that passport holders can enter without needing a visa.

In the global perception category, Bangladesh scored 30. According to Nomad Capitalist, countries scoring below 50 in this metric often face negative reception from locals when their citizens travel abroad, indicating that Bangladeshi travellers may not experience warm hospitality in many parts of the world.

In terms of personal freedom, Bangladesh's score stands at a low 10 — considered the minimum level of personal liberty.

The report notes that those scoring between 10 and 20 enjoy very limited freedom as citizens.

Bangladesh's overall score in this year's index is 38 out of a possible 110.

At present, Bangladeshi passport holders can travel to 50 countries without a visa or obtain a visa on arrival or an e-visa.

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Tariff twist leaves

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Rahman, secretary at the Ministry of Commerce. "It could be 37 percent, or it could be over 52 percent if added to current Most Favoured Nation [MFN] rates, which for Bangladesh are already above 15 percent on many items."

Sharif Zahir, managing director of Ananta Group, said his company has not received updated tariff information from buyers yet. But different sources suggest both possibilities — that the 37 percent could either replace or stack up on top of existing rates.

BRANDS SIGNAL HIGHER RATES

Anwar Hossain, administrator of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and vice chairman of the Export Promotion Bureau, said one US-bound apparel brand has already informed them that the new rate for Bangladesh may indeed be 48.56 percent.

"We're preparing our strategy based on that assumption," he said. "And the executive order clearly frames it as an additional duty."

Anwar Hossain also said the measure, while framed as a tariff adjustment, is rooted in broader US concerns over persistent trade deficits.

"The US is a trading economy that depends on imports," he said. "This move isn't just about duties. It's about shifting trade flows in Washington's favour," he said.

Experts have estimated how the policy could impact other top apparel exporters. While these numbers have not been released by the US government, they offer a preview of how global sourcing might shift:

BNP prepares for demos

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He also mentioned that the Consensus Commission is collecting the political parties' input on reforms.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said the leaders will discuss the possible meeting with the chief adviser and the protest programmes at the next standing committee meeting.

The BNP held several demonstrations before Ramadan and then there was a lull.

Commenting on the interim government, a senior BNP leader said, "They're using reforms as a pretext to extend their stay in power."

Four days after Prof Yunus's televised address, Fakhrul said, "The lack of an election roadmap reflects [the government's] political inexperience. I am sorry to say this."

Only a clear roadmap will solve the political crisis because the parties will then begin preparing for the election.

Many BNP leaders eager to be members of parliament campaigned in their constituencies during the Eid

holidays.

Party high ups said they told such potential candidates to continue campaigning before a fresh programme is announced.

"A strong push must be made to mount pressure on the interim government to hold the election. We have recently held rallies in various districts to make our position clear. We will take to the streets again and gradually intensify the demonstrations," said a standing committee member.

The BNP is also in discussions with like-minded parties to ensure a coordinated movement.

Party leaders say they will draw an elaborate strategy after the meeting with the chief adviser.

A senior leader said the meeting would take place by this week or the next.

The BNP has been demanding the interim government make the necessary reforms and leave the major ones for the next, elected government. The National Citizen Party and several others want the current administration to carry out all the reforms.

Trade chaos as Trump tariff

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on the water at midnight yesterday.

But a US Customs and Border Protection bulletin did provide a 51-day grace period for cargoes loaded onto vessels or planes and in transit to the US before 12:01am ET. These cargoes need arrive by 12:01am ET on May 27 to avoid the 10 percent duty.

At the same hour on Wednesday, Trump's higher "reciprocal" tariff rates of 11 percent to 50 percent are due to take effect. European Union imports will be hit with a 20 percent tariff, while Chinese goods will be hit with a 34 percent tariff, bringing Trump's total new levies on China to 54 percent.

Beijing yesterday said "the market has spoken" in rejecting Trump's tariffs after it hit Washington with a slew of countermeasures, including extra levies of 34 percent on all US goods and export curbs on some rare earth minerals.

"China has been hit much harder than the USA, not even close," Trump said yesterday on social media. "THIS IS AN ECONOMIC REVOLUTION, AND WE WILL WIN. HANG TOUGH, it won't be easy, but the end result will be historic."

Shortly after posting the comment, Trump was spotted arriving at his Trump

National Golf Club in Jupiter, Florida, reading a New York Post article covering China's retaliation to Trump's tariffs and the stock market "crash."

Some world leaders moved quickly to strike a deal with Trump to avert economic disruption, while others weighed countermeasures.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to visit the White House tomorrow, sources said, as unspecified goods from the country face a 17 percent tariff under the new policy. Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba was reportedly seeking a telephone conversation with Trump. Tokyo faces a 24 percent levy.

Vietnam, which benefited from the shift of US supply chains away from China after Trump's first-term trade war with Beijing, will be hit with a 46 percent tariff and agreed on Friday to discuss a deal with Trump.

The head of Taiwan's National Security Council was in Washington for talks with the Trump administration that were expected to include the tariffs, a source said. Taiwan President Lai Ching-te huddled with tech executives on Saturday to discuss how to respond to the 32 percent duty it faces on its products.